

Speech delivered at the

**United Nations Association of Canada/United Nations  
Development Programme Conference**

by

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Ottawa, Canada

*October 16, 1997*

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I want to begin by thanking the organizers of the conference for putting us all on the spot today. It may not be easy for organizations working internationally to come to grips with good governance and democratization, although we must do it. Forums like this provide an opportunity to explore together how we can really make a difference. There may not yet be effective programs in place. We must have them very soon, for I can think of no other topic now confronting us, which is so pressing.

I say it is pressing for two reasons. First, I believe that our domestic public, to whom we are ultimately accountable, is demanding that we recognize the critical factor which good governance and democracy play in international development. They are no longer willing to pay the bills when corruption, human rights abuses, and dictatorship get in the way of achieving the social and economic development which they want their tax dollars to support. Second, I believe that the publics of the third world, which organizations like IDRC are trying to serve, demand it as well. They are unwilling to see the resources which we provide, being used for purposes which they do not support, or at least for purposes they have had no role in determining.

I think this link between democracy, good governance, and development was perfectly expressed by Boutros Boutros-Ghali when he was the U.N. Secretary-General. He said:

Democracy and development are linked in fundamental ways. They are linked because democracy provides the only long-term basis for managing

competing ethnic, religious, and cultural interests in a way that minimizes the risk of violent internal conflict. They are linked because democracy is inherently attached to the question of good governance, which has an impact on all aspects of development efforts. They are linked because democracy is a fundamental human right, the advancement of which is itself an important measure of development. They are linked because people's participation in the decision-making process which affects their lives is a basic tenet of development. Improving and enhancing governance is an essential condition for the success of development. Governance may be the single most important variable within the control of individual states.

To me, that last thought can act as a beacon for many of our efforts. In this decade, many people have come to believe the control of the sovereign state over its own destiny has been eroded. The state is said to be a prisoner of international economic forces, including international financial institutions, and allegedly currency speculators. It is refreshing to hear it said that there is still a mechanism of vital importance which states have at their disposal to radically improve their situation. States control the way they govern themselves, and the way they govern themselves has a profound effect on whether they live in peace or war, tolerance or intolerance, prosperity or poverty.

If international organizations accept this, if we accept the pre-eminent role which democracy plays in development, how can we not support the people of developing countries with programs which enhance their ability to establish and sustain good government through democratic development? But what should those programs be? The organization which I head, IDRC, does not have a specific mandate in this area. Our mandate is much more general -- to support research for development. Sometimes organizations do things which truly are supportive of human rights and democracy, the twin pillars supporting good governance, without necessarily having thought about them in that way. We're now beginning a process at IDRC of re-examining some of the things we do, to understand the ways in which they have been or could be supportive of human rights and democracy. We are also thinking about other things we should do within our mandate, which would promote them. I confess we have no eye-popping insights yet into the best way of doing this. In fact, we would welcome the views of all of you as we go through this process. But when you think about it, IDRC's basic mandate of research and our slogan of "empowerment through knowledge" are central to promoting democracy. Public debate, pluralism, and the competition of ideas, all characteristics of democracy, are dependent on the knowledge which often arises as a result of good research. Of equal importance is the way that you conduct research. It must, in fact, be done democratically. You must promote a participatory and inclusive style of research, with results communicated in an accessible way.

In many societies, political processes have excluded from effective involvement numerous

marginalized groups, such as indigenous peoples and women. Research is a vehicle through which these groups themselves can identify their concerns and, through participating in the research, identify solutions to them. Conducted at an international level, research is also the way in which people can exchange experiences and strategies with their counterparts in other countries, fostering solidarity with similarly placed groups, and developing a momentum for their inclusion in the political processes of their country. For example, domestic abuse has emerged as a consistent concern of women's groups internationally. Many women have come to regard research into the occurrence of violence, and popular dissemination of its results, as the most important way to combat the notion that violence is acceptable, and to change not only the popular notions about domestic abuse but also the laws which govern it.

Another area where I can say IDRC has been a global leader is in the area of research on the use of new information technologies, which enhance the ability of previously isolated groups, especially rural communities, to learn and to influence the democratic process. Such technologies can be crucial in linking separate communities, and in linking the communities with local and national governments. For example, we hope that a study of "telecentres" in Africa will determine whether they are a means through which isolated communities can collectively examine and reinforce their own views on public issues, and build a local political consensus sufficiently powerful to influence policy.

IDRC has also been a leader, considerably helped by additional resources from CIDA's budget I might add, in working with individuals and groups which aim for power after long periods of exclusion from the political process. They may be without the means to develop policies which attract support and which permit the fair and effective governance of a modern state. They do not have the support of a competent public service, nor the range of contacts which stimulate thought and which permit the informed study of pressing public issues. Research support for such groups, of the kind which Canada offered through IDRC to the democratic movement in South Africa, has been crucial in equipping democratic forces with the analysis which allowed them to develop well-considered, progressive policies which helped eventually to establish their credibility as governments.

Another area of pressing concern, of which we have all become too aware in recent years, is research on how to foster peace. Peace is both the product of human rights and democracy, and the condition in which human rights and democracy can be fully established. The absence of respect for human dignity and the failure of a system to accommodate citizens' concerns and express their will, both lead to the disaffection and disillusionment which give rise to civil conflicts, which represent the great majority of conflicts in the world. Good research can identify the grievances, their root causes and suggest solutions. In a post-conflict setting it can suggest the reforms which promote human rights and democracy which help to rebuild a better country. To cite one example, research can identify opportunities to convert industries to peaceful purposes and to demobilize troops into productive labour, so as to drain militarization from a

society and thereby promote civilian rule.

I know that all development organizations have recognized for a long time that part of our mandate must include building up indigenous institutions as a mechanism to promote good governance and better public policies. Under authoritarian regimes, non-governmental institutions which could formulate competitive views are often starved out of existence. Donor support for research to such institutions, as was provided by IDRC to institutions in the southern cone of Latin America during the military dictatorships in those countries, is a politically viable method to save the institutions and to preserve the national capacity to examine public policy in a critical way.

It goes without saying that research into governance itself is crucial in determining how a democratizing effect can be achieved. One key area where this is occurring is on the whole question of decentralization of decision-making, including its effect on the delivery of improved health services and education. It is also important in examining equality issues. One example is a current research study on the practical effect of legislation guaranteeing that women will occupy a minimum number of legislative seats in Bangladesh.

These are some of the examples of ways in which a research-supporting institution can help the process of promoting good governance and democracy. Let's hope that if we reconvene on this topic in a few more years, we all will have more examples of what can be done, and some concrete studies which demonstrate the impact Canadian institutions can have in this vital area.

In closing, I would like to recount the story of a Canadian missionary who was working in Central America during their horrible period of bloodshed, human rights violations, and anti-democratic government in the late 1980's. On one visit home to Canada, he said that in travelling across the country, he found alienation and resignation everywhere. He would go to the Maritimes or to the West, and people would blame Central Canada for their troubles and say they were powerless to change things. He would go to Toronto, and people would blame Ottawa for their problems. He would come to Ottawa, and we would blame Toronto for our problems. He compared our mindset to the mindset of the people with whom he was working in El Salvador. They were surrounded by the horror of war, those governing them were unrepresentative, and they were constantly threatened. And yet, they felt intimately involved in the civil life of their country. They believed they could make a difference and make things better. They were not discouraged; they were not without hope. I believe that international development organizations should take strength, indeed guidance from people like those citizens of El Salvador. We should feel an obligation to align our support with the elements in a society struggling for peace. And we should share their optimism that even in the midst of turmoil and strife, democracy can be made to grow.

